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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHINA'S "ANTI-SECESSION LAW"

1. SUMMARY: As newspapers in Taiwan continued their coverage of China's "anti-secession law" March 10, the focus moved to the U.S. role in the situation. Comments by White House Spokesman Scott McClellan and State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher describing the "anti-secession law" as "unhelpful" ran on the front pages of several Taipei dailies. The front-page headline of the pro-unification "United Daily News" read: "The United States urges both sides of the Taiwan Strait to refrain from taking actions to counter-attack each other." The newspaper said in an analysis piece that the U.S. pressure on Taiwan will be stronger than that on China. The centrist "China Times" carried a banner headline noting that "Randy Schriver says China is held responsible to fix the mistake it makes" by presenting the controversial legislation. Its editorial criticized China for forcing Taiwan to seek independence by depriving the island of its international space. A news analysis in the paper questioned whether the United States will succeed in persuading China not to enact the law as it did not succeed in dissuading Taiwan from holding referendums in 2004. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" urged the Taiwan authorities to step up the process of Taiwanization to counter the threat of China's annexation of Taiwan. End of summary.

A) "People Are Waiting Expectantly"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (3/10):

" . These days, we are deeply concerned about the aberration of the ruling DPP after the meeting between President Chen Shui-bian and PFP Chairman James Soong. For the sake of the interests of all the people of Taiwan, we have harshly and justly criticized the DPP's loss of direction. The fact of the anti-secession law proves that Taiwan's political parties are all wrong regarding their pro-China stances. Taiwan's current situation is extremely difficult, and we can no longer be beguiled by any small favors from China such as cross-Strait charter flights for the Lunar New Year. Taiwan should not be careless about this crisis. It is time [for Taiwan] to conduct a thorough review of its cross-Strait economic and financial policies that carry the name of 'effective management,' but in reality are 'proactively opened' and tilted toward China. The review will assure Taiwan's national security and make sure businesses remain in Taiwan. By so doing, Taiwan can keep the capability to defend itself when China uses force against Taiwan. More importantly, the anti-annexation plan cannot [consist] merely of slogans. The government should propose concrete and firm plans to counter China effectively. The Taiwanization movement should continue. President Chen Shui-bian should keep his promise and lead a rally of half a million Taiwan people March 26 to protest China's legislation of a bully law that is aimed at annexing Taiwan. The people of Taiwan look forward to having every political party attend the rally and speak out loud to the world the voice of the people of Taiwan."

B) "The Republic of China Has Always Been 'Anti-secession'"

The editorial of centrist/pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] said (3/10):

" . According to its Constitution and system [of governance], the Republic of China (ROC) has always been 'anti-independence' and has insisted on 'anti-secession.' How can there be any 'secession' issue? And there is certainly no need for Beijing's National People's Congress to define or set rules for Taiwan regarding what conditions equal 'secession' and what situations equal 'Taiwan independence.' .

" . Indeed, there is a not insignificant percentage of people in Taiwan who favor Taiwan independence. The Beijing authority has also repeatedly claimed that their insistence in enacting the anti-secession law was forced by certain Taiwanese who want to achieve 'de jure independence' by holding referendums or instituting a new constitution. Has Beijing ever thought about why the advocacy for independence keeps growing in Taiwan? Is it not a result of the fact that the ROC has been deprived of its international

position? When the ROC is forced to disappear in the international community and cannot go beyond its door, how can this be not providing the richest soil for promoting a new constitution and a change of national name? Does Beijing not know that it is exactly its own deeds that are the strongest driving force, which is likely to lead to Taiwan's separation from China?

". The Beijing authority has never realized that the ROC is the only common ground agreed to by both the ruling and opposition parties in Taiwan now, as reconfirmed by the recent Chen Shui-bian and James Soong meeting. Among the various entanglements, it is the only historical umbilical cord between the two sides of the Strait. The only way to resolve the fast knot of cross-Strait political disputes and the crisis of cross-Strait separation is to take a positive view toward the ROC."

C) "The United States Shuttles Back and Forth Across the Taiwan Strait and `Fights the War' on Two Fronts"

Washington Correspondent Liu Ping wrote in the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] (3/10):

". Regarding the `anti-secession law,' the U.S. strategy is quite clear, that is to oppose any use of force across the Taiwan Strait, and any unilateral change in the status quo. Tactically, the United States has been engaging both China and Taiwan at the same time. On the one hand, the United States hopes that the Chinese authorities would have second thoughts and [decide it is] better not to have the law legislated; on the other hand, the United States urges Taiwan remain calm ..

". In a similar vein, the United States adopted the same strategy when Taiwan was planning to hold referenda in 2003. At the time the United States kept negotiating with Taiwan and hoped Taiwan would withdraw the decision; the United States also asked China to keep calm. Regarding the anti-secession law, the United States has hoped from the beginning that China would give up this idea while expecting Taiwan to remain calm. But in the end, Taiwan held the referenda and China is enacting the anti-secession law after all . .

"From the White House, the Department of State, academics, to public opinion in the United States, the sentence "The anti-secession law is not helpful" has been repeated again and again. But when the United States tried to dissuade Taiwan from holding the referenda, it also repeated the same "not helpful" line. Did Taiwan listen to this? Then will China listen?"

D) "Behind the Carrot, the United States Is Waving a Big Stick. For Beijing, It Appears to Be Only Able to Make Gestures; for Taipei, Harsh Criticism May Come Any Time Depending on Reactions"

Washington Correspondent Vincent Chang of the conservative/pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] commented (3/10):

"Once China adopts the legislation, due to the closeness of current U.S.-China relations, even if Washington is angry and wants to downgrade its relations with Beijing, the downgrading would not last long. .

"Therefore, what worries Washington is, in fact, Taiwan's reaction. Washington certainly does not want to see Taiwan's rejection and follow-up moves against the anti-secession law move up to a certain degree and become a trigger to activate the anti-secession law.

"Although the United States appears to be on Taipei's side, the comment [by the United States] of no `anti- and counter-anti' moves is mainly aimed at Taipei. Even [U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State] Randy Schriver made it clear that [the United States] hopes Taipei will `make contributions' to moving toward `the correct direction' and not `go in the wrong direction' like China.

"The hard fact is that Washington's stick cannot stop Beijing from making the law but is forcing Taipei to take the `correct direction' under the shadow of the stick. While Beijing continues to stride in the `wrong direction,' Taipei can only [face] to reality and make `self-restraining contributions.'"

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